(e) *Sharks.* The following size limits change depending on the species being caught and the retention limit under which they are being caught as specified under § 635.22(c).

(1) All sharks landed under the recreational retention limits specified at § 635.22(c) must have the head, tail, and fins naturally attached.

(2) All sharks, except as otherwise specified in paragraphs (e)(3) through (6) of this section, landed under the recreational retention limits specified at § 635.22(c)(2) must be at least 54 inches (137 cm) FL.

(3) There is no size limit for Atlantic sharpnose or bonnethead sharks taken under the recreational retention limits specified at § 635.22(c)(3).

(4) All hammerhead sharks landed under the recreational retention limits specified at § 635.22(c)(2) must be at least 78 inches (198.1 cm) FL.

(5) There is no size limit for smoothhound sharks taken under the recreational retention limits specified at § 635.22(c)(6).

(6) For North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks landed under the recreational retention limits specified at § 635.22(c)(2), males must be at least 71 inches (180 cm) fork length, and females must be at least 83 inches (210 cm) fork length.

(f) *Swordfish.* (1) For a swordfish that has its head naturally attached, the LJFL is the sole criterion for determining the size of a swordfish. No person shall take, retain, possess, or land a whole (head on) North or South Atlantic swordfish taken from its management unit that is not equal to or greater than 47 inches (119 cm) LJFL. A swordfish with the head naturally attached that is damaged by shark bites may be retained only if the length of the remainder of the fish is equal to or greater than 47 inches (119 cm) LJFL.

(2) If the head of a swordfish is no longer naturally attached, the CK measurement is the sole criterion for determining the size of a swordfish. No person shall take, retain, possess, or land a dressed North or South Atlantic swordfish taken from its management unit that is not equal to or greater than 25 inches (63 cm) CK length. A swordfish that is damaged by shark bites may be retained only if the length of the remainder of the carcass is equal to or greater than 25 inches (63 cm) CK length.

(3) No person shall import into the United States an Atlantic swordfish weighing less than 33 lb (15 kg) dressed weight, or a part derived from a swordfish that weighs less than 33 lb (15 kg) dressed weight.

(4) Except for a swordfish landed in a Pacific state and remaining in that Pacific state of landing, a swordfish, or part thereof, not meeting the minimum size measurements specified in § 635.20(f)(1) or (2) will be deemed to be an Atlantic swordfish harvested by a vessel of the United States and to be in violation of the minimum size requirement of this section unless such swordfish, or part thereof, is accompanied by a swordfish statistical document attesting that the swordfish was lawfully imported. Refer to § 300.186 of this title for the requirements related to the swordfish statistical document.

(5) A swordfish, or part thereof, will be monitored for compliance with the minimum size requirement of this section from the time it is landed in, or imported into, the United States up to, and including, the point of first transaction in the United States.

[64 FR 29135, May 28, 1999, as amended at 64 FR 37704, July 13, 1999; 66 FR 42804, Aug. 15, 2001; 68 FR 714, Jan. 7, 2003; 68 FR 74785, Dec. 24, 2003; 69 FR 67284, Nov. 17, 2004; 71 FR 58167, Oct. 2, 2006; 74 FR 66587, Dec. 19, 2009; 75 FR 30525, June 1, 2010; 75 FR 57701, Sept. 22, 2010; 76 FR 70066, Nov. 10, 2011; 77 FR 45280, July 31, 2012; 78 FR 40346, July 3, 2013; 80 FR 73145, Nov. 24, 2015; 83 FR 33154, July 17, 2018; 83 FR 51397, Oct. 11, 2018; 84 FR 5376, Feb. 21, 2019]

§ 635.21 Gear operation and deployment restrictions.

(a) *All Atlantic HMS fishing gears.* (1) An Atlantic HMS harvested from its management unit that is not retained must be released in a manner that will ensure maximum probability of survival, but without removing the fish from the water.

(2) If a billfish is caught by a hook and not retained, the fish must be released by cutting the line near the hook or by using a dehooking device, in either case without removing the fish from the water.

(3) *Restricted gear and closed areas for all Atlantic HMS fishing gears.* (i) No

person may fish for, catch, possess, or retain any Atlantic HMS or anchor a fishing vessel that has been issued a permit or is required to be permitted under this part, in the areas and seasons designated at §622.34(a)(3) of this chapter, and in the Tortugas marine reserves HAPC designated at §622.74(c) of this chapter.

(ii) From November through April of each year, no vessel issued, or required to be issued, a permit under this part may fish or deploy any type of fishing gear in the Madison-Swanson closed area or the Steamboat Lumps closed area, as defined in §635.2.

(iii) From May through October of each year, no vessel issued, or required to be issued, a permit under this part may fish or deploy any type of fishing gear in the Madison-Swanson or the Steamboat Lumps closed areas except for surface trolling. For the purposes of this section, surface trolling is defined as fishing with lines trailing behind a vessel which is in constant motion at speeds in excess of four knots with a visible wake. Such trolling may not involve the use of down riggers, wire lines, planers, or similar devices.

(iv) From January through April of each year, no vessel issued, or required to be issued, a permit under this part may fish or deploy any type of fishing gear in the Edges 40 Fathom Contour closed area, as defined in §635.2.

(4) Any person on board a vessel that is issued a commercial shark permit must release all shortfin mako sharks, whether alive or dead, caught with any gear other than pelagic longline, bottom longline, or gillnet gear, except that any person on board a vessel that is issued a commercial shark permit in combination with a permit that has a shark endorsement may retain shortfin mako sharks subject to the recreational minimum size limits in §635.20, the recreational retention limits in §635.22, and authorized gear requirements in §635.19.

(b) *Longline—general restrictions.* (1) All vessels that have pelagic or bottom longline gear onboard and that have been issued, or are required to have, a swordfish, shark, or Atlantic Tunas Longline category LAP for use in the Atlantic Ocean including the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico must possess inside the wheelhouse the document provided by NMFS entitled ''Careful Release Protocols for Sea Turtle Release with Minimal Injury,'' and must also post inside the wheelhouse the sea turtle handling and release guidelines provided by NMFS.

(2) Transiting and gear stowage: If a vessel issued or required to be issued a LAP under this part has pelagic or bottom longline gear onboard and is in a closed or gear restricted area as designated in paragraph (c)(2) of this section or a monitoring area designated in paragraph (c)(3) of this section that has been closed, it is a rebuttable presumption that any fish on board such a vessel were taken with pelagic or bottom longline gear in the area except where such possession is aboard a vessel transiting such an area with all fishing gear stowed appropriately. Longline gear is stowed appropriately if all gangions and hooks are disconnected from the mainline and are stowed on or below deck, hooks are not baited, and all buoys and weights are disconnected from the mainline and drum (buoys may remain on deck).

(3) When a marine mammal or sea turtle is hooked or entangled by pelagic or bottom longline gear, the operator of the vessel must immediately release the animal, retrieve the pelagic or bottom longline gear, and move at least 1 nm (2 km) from the location of the incident before resuming fishing. Similarly, when a smalltooth sawfish is hooked or entangled by bottom longline gear, the operator of the vessel must immediately release the animal, retrieve the bottom longline gear, and move at least 1 nm (2 km) from the location of the incident before resuming fishing. Reports of marine mammal entanglements must be submitted to NMFS consistent with regulations in §229.6 of this title.

(4) Vessels that have pelagic or bottom longline gear on board and that have been issued, or are required to have been issued, a permit under this part must have only corrodible hooks on board.

(c) *Pelagic longlines.* (1) If a vessel issued or required to be issued a permit under this part:

(i) Has bottom longline gear on board and is in a closed or gear restricted

area designated under paragraph (c)(2) of this section or is in a monitoring area designated under paragraph (c)(3) of this section that has been closed, the vessel may not, at any time, possess or land any pelagic species listed in table 2 of appendix A to this part in excess of 5 percent, by weight, of the total weight of pelagic and demersal species possessed or landed, that are listed in tables 2 and 3 of appendix A to this part.

(ii) Has pelagic longline gear on board, persons aboard that vessel may not possess, retain, transship, land, sell, or store silky sharks, oceanic whitetip sharks, or scalloped, smooth, or great hammerhead sharks.

(iii) Has pelagic longline gear on board, persons aboard that vessel are required to release unharmed, to the extent practicable, porbeagle sharks that are alive at the time of haulback.

(iv) Has pelagic longline gear on board, persons aboard that vessel are required to promptly release in a manner that causes the least harm any shortfin mako shark that is alive at the time of haulback. Any shortfin mako shark that is dead at the time of haulback may be retained provided the electronic monitoring system is installed and functioning in compliance with the requirements at § 635.9.

(2) If pelagic longline gear is on board a vessel issued or required to be issued a LAP under this part, persons aboard that vessel may not fish or deploy any type of fishing gear:

(i) In the Charleston Bump closed area from February 1 through April 30 each calendar year;

(ii) In the East Florida Coast closed area at any time;

(iii) In the Desoto Canyon closed area at any time;

(iv) In the Northeast Distant gear restricted area at any time, unless persons onboard the vessel complies with the following:

(A) The vessel is limited to possessing onboard and/or using only 18/0 or larger circle hooks with an offset not to exceed 10 degrees. The outer diameter of the circle hook at its widest point must be no smaller than 2.16 inches (55 mm) when measured with the eye on the hook on the vertical axis (y-axis) and perpendicular to the horizontal axis (x-axis), and the distance between the circle hook point and the shank (*i.e.,* the gap) must be no larger than 1.13 inches (28.8 mm). The allowable offset is measured from the barbed end of the hook and is relative to the parallel plane of the eyed-end, or shank, of the hook when laid on its side. The only allowable offset circle hooks are those that are offset by the hook manufacturer. If green-stick gear, as defined at § 635.2, is onboard, a vessel may possess up to 20 J-hooks. J-hooks may be used only with green-stick gear, and no more than 10 hooks may be used at one time with each green-stick gear. J-hooks used with green-stick gear may be no smaller than 1.5 inch (38.1 mm) when measured in a straight line over the longest distance from the eye to any other part of the hook; and,

(B) The vessel is limited, at all times, to possessing onboard and/or using only whole Atlantic mackerel and/or squid bait, except that artificial bait may be possessed and used only with green-stick gear, as defined at § 635.2, if green-stick gear is onboard; and,

(C) Vessels must possess, inside the wheelhouse, a document provided by NMFS entitled, ''Careful Release Protocols for Sea Turtle Release with Minimal Injury,'' and must post, inside the wheelhouse, sea turtle handling and release guidelines provided by NMFS; and,

(D) Required sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear, which NMFS has approved under paragraph (c)(5)(iv) of this section, on the initial list of ''NMFS-Approved Models For Equipment Needed For The Careful Release of Sea Turtles Caught In Hook And Line Fisheries,'' must be carried onboard, and must be used in accordance with the handling requirements specified in paragraphs (c)(2)(iv)(E) through (G) of this section; and,

(E) Sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear, specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(D) of this section, must be used to disengage any hooked or entangled sea turtles that cannot be brought on board, and to facilitate access, safe handling, disentanglement, and hook removal or hook cutting from sea turtles that can be brought on board, where feasible. Sea turtles must be

handled, and bycatch mitigation gear must be used, in accordance with the careful release protocols and handling/release guidelines specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(C) of this section, and in accordance with the onboard handling and resuscitation requirements specified in § 223.206(d)(1) of this title.

(F) Boated turtles: When practicable, active and comatose sea turtles must be brought on board, with a minimum of injury, using a dipnet approved on the initial list specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(D) of this section. All turtles less than 3 ft. (.91 m) carapace length should be boated, if sea conditions permit. A boated turtle should be placed on a standard automobile tire, or cushioned surface, in an upright orientation to immobilize it and facilitate gear removal. Then, it should be determined if the hook can be removed without causing further injury. All externally embedded hooks should be removed, unless hook removal would result in further injury to the turtle. No attempt to remove a hook should be made if the hook has been swallowed and the insertion point is not visible, or if it is determined that removal would result in further injury. If a hook cannot be removed, as much line as possible should be removed from the turtle using approved monofilament line cutters from the initial list specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(D) of this section, and the hook should be cut as close as possible to the insertion point, using bolt cutters from that list, before releasing the turtle. If a hook can be removed, an effective technique may be to cut off either the barb, or the eye, of the hook using bolt cutters, and then to slide the hook out. When the hook is visible in the front of the mouth, an approved mouth-opener from the initial list specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(D) of this section may facilitate opening the turtle's mouth, and an approved gag from that list may facilitate keeping the mouth open. Short-handled dehookers for ingested hooks, long-nose pliers, or needle-nose pliers from the initial list specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(D) of this section should be used to remove visible hooks that have not been swallowed from the mouth of boated turtles, as appropriate. As much gear as possible must be removed from the turtle without causing further injury prior to its release. Refer to the careful release protocols and handling/release guidelines required in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(C) of this section, and the handling and resuscitation requirements specified in § 223.206(d)(1) of this title, for additional information.

(G) Non-boated turtles: If a sea turtle is too large, or hooked in a manner that precludes safe boating without causing further damage or injury to the turtle, sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear, specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(D) of this section, must be used to disentangle sea turtles from fishing gear and disengage any hooks, or to clip the line and remove as much line as possible from a hook that cannot be removed, prior to releasing the turtle, in accordance with the protocols specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(C) of this section. Non-boated turtles should be brought close to the boat and provided with time to calm down. Then, it must be determined whether or not the hook can be removed without causing further injury. A front flipper or flippers of the turtle must be secured, if possible, with an approved turtle control device from the list specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(D) of this section. All externally embedded hooks must be removed, unless hook removal would result in further injury to the turtle. No attempt should be made to remove a hook if it has been swallowed, or if it is determined that removal would result in further injury. If the hook cannot be removed and/or if the animal is entangled, as much line as possible must be removed prior to release, using an approved line cutter from the list specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(D) of this section. If the hook can be removed, it must be removed using a long-handled dehooker from the initial list specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(D) of this section. Without causing further injury, as much gear as possible must be removed from the turtle prior to its release. Refer to the careful release protocols and handling/release guidelines required in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(C) of this section, and the handling and resuscitation requirements specified in § 223.206(d)(1) of this title, for additional information.

(3) From April 2, 2020 to December 31, 2022, a vessel issued or required to be issued a LAP under this part may fish with pelagic longline gear in the Northeastern United States Pelagic Longline Monitoring Area during the month of June or in the Spring Gulf of Mexico Pelagic Longline Monitoring Area during the months of April and May until the annual IBQ allocation threshold for the monitoring area has been reached or is projected to be reached. The annual IBQ allocation threshold is 150,519 lb for the Northeastern United States Pelagic Longline Monitoring Area, and 63,150 lb for the Spring Gulf of Mexico Pelagic Longline Monitoring Area. If between April 2, 2020 and December 31, 2022, the U.S. allocation of ICCAT bluefin tuna quota codified at §635.27(a) is reduced, and the BFT Longline category quota established at §635.26 (a)(3) is subsequently reduced, the annual IBQ allocation thresholds for each monitoring area will be modified as follows: The Gulf of Mexico threshold will be 55 percent of the Gulf of Mexico regional designation as defined at §635.15 (b)(2) and 72 percent of the Atlantic regional designation as defined at §635.15 (b)(2). When the relevant threshold is reached, or is projected to be reached, NMFS will file for publication with the Office of the Federal Register a closure for that monitoring area, which will be effective no fewer than five days from date of filing. From the effective date and time of the closure forward, vessels issued or required to be issued a LAP under this part and that have pelagic longline gear on board are prohibited from deploying pelagic longline gear within the boundaries of the relevant monitoring area during the months specified for that area in this paragraph above. After December 31, 2022, if no closure of a particular monitoring area has been implemented under the provisions of this paragraph, vessels with pelagic longline gear on board may continue to deploy pelagic longline gear in that area; if a closure has been issued for a particular monitoring area under the provisions of this paragraph, vessels with pelagic longline gear on board will continue to be prohibited from deploying pelagic longline gear in that area.

(4) In the Gulf of Mexico, pelagic longline gear may not be fished or deployed from a vessel issued or required to have been issued a LAP under this part with live bait affixed to the hooks; and, a person aboard a vessel issued or required to have been issued a LAP under this part that has pelagic longline gear on board may not possess live baitfish, maintain live baitfish in any tank or well on board the vessel, or set up or attach an aeration or water circulation device in or to any such tank or well. For the purposes of this section, the Gulf of Mexico includes all waters of the U.S. EEZ west and north of the boundary stipulated at 50 CFR 600.105(c).

(5) The operator of a vessel permitted or required to be permitted under this part and that has pelagic longline gear on board must undertake the following sea turtle bycatch mitigation measures:

(i) *Possession and use of required mitigation gear*. Required sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear, which NMFS has approved under paragraph (c)(5)(iv) of this section as meeting the minimum design standards specified in paragraphs (c)(5)(i)(A) through (M) of this section, must be carried onboard, and must be used to disengage any hooked or entangled sea turtles in accordance with the handling requirements specified in paragraph (c)(5)(ii) of this section.

(A) *Long-handled line clipper or cutter*. Line cutters are intended to cut high test monofilament line as close as possible to the hook, and assist in removing line from entangled sea turtles to minimize any remaining gear upon release. NMFS has established minimum design standards for the line cutters, which may be purchased or fabricated from readily available and low-cost materials. The LaForce line cutter and the Arceneaux line clipper are models that meet these minimum design standards. One long-handled line clipper or cutter meeting the minimum design standards, and a set of replacement blades, are required to be onboard. The minimum design standards for line cutters are as follows:

(*1*) A protected and secured cutting blade. The cutting blade(s) must be capable of cutting 2.0–2.1 mm (0.078 in.–

0.083 in.) monofilament line (400-lb test) or polypropylene multistrand material, known as braided or tarred mainline, and must be maintained in working order. The cutting blade must be curved, recessed, contained in a holder, or otherwise designed to facilitate its safe use so that direct contact between the cutting surface and the sea turtle or the user is prevented. The cutting instrument must be securely attached to an extended reach handle and be easily replaceable. One extra set of replacement blades meeting these standards must also be carried on board to replace all cutting surfaces on the line cutter or clipper.

(*2*) An extended reach handle. The line cutter blade(s) must be securely fastened to an extended reach handle or pole with a minimum length equal to, or greater than, 150 percent of the height of the vessel's freeboard, or 6 feet (1.83 m), whichever is greater. It is recommended, but not required, that the handle break down into sections. There is no restriction on the type of material used to construct this handle as long as it is sturdy and facilitates the secure attachment of the cutting blade.

(B) *Long-handled dehooker for ingested hooks.* A long-handled dehooking device is intended to remove ingested hooks from sea turtles that cannot be boated. It should also be used to engage a loose hook when a turtle is entangled but not hooked, and line is being removed. The design must shield the barb of the hook and prevent it from re-engaging during the removal process. One long-handled device, meeting the minimum design standards, is required onboard to remove ingested hooks. The minimum design standards are as follows:

(*1*) Hook removal device. The hook removal device must be constructed of 5/16-inch (7.94 mm) 316 L stainless steel and have a dehooking end no larger than 1–7/8-inches (4.76 cm) outside diameter. The device must securely engage and control the leader while shielding the barb to prevent the hook from re-engaging during removal. It may not have any unprotected terminal points (including blunt ones), as these could cause injury to the esophagus during hook removal. The device must be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles used in the pelagic longline fishery targeting swordfish and tuna.

(*2*) Extended reach handle. The dehooking end must be securely fastened to an extended reach handle or pole with a minimum length equal to or greater than 150 percent of the height of the vessel's freeboard, or 6 ft. (1.83 m), whichever is greater. It is recommended, but not required, that the handle break down into sections. The handle must be sturdy and strong enough to facilitate the secure attachment of the hook removal device.

(C) *Long-handled dehooker for external hooks.* A long-handled dehooker, meeting the minimum design standards, is required onboard for use on externally-hooked sea turtles that cannot be boated. The long-handled dehooker for ingested hooks described in paragraph (c)(5)(i)(B) of this section would meet this requirement. The minimum design standards are as follows:

(*1*) Construction. A long-handled dehooker must be constructed of 5/16-inch (7.94 mm) 316 L stainless steel rod. A 5-inch (12.7-cm) tube T-handle of 1-inch (2.54 cm) outside diameter is recommended, but not required. The design should be such that a fish hook can be rotated out, without pulling it out at an angle. The dehooking end must be blunt with all edges rounded. The device must be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles used in the pelagic longline fishery targeting swordfish and tuna.

(*2*) Extended reach handle. The handle must be a minimum length equal to the height of the vessel's freeboard or 6 ft. (1.83 m), whichever is greater.

(D) *Long-handled device to pull an ''inverted V.''* This tool is used to pull a ''V'' in the fishing line when implementing the ''inverted V'' dehooking technique, as described in the document entitled ''Careful Release Protocols for Sea Turtle Release With Minimal Injury,'' required under paragraph (a)(3) of this section, for disentangling and dehooking entangled sea turtles. One long-handled device to pull an ''inverted V'', meeting the minimum design standards, is required onboard. If a 6-ft (1.83 m) J-style dehooker is used to comply with paragraph (c)(5)(i)(C) of this section, it will also

satisfy this requirement. Minimum design standards are as follows:

(*1*) *Hook end.* This device, such as a standard boat hook or gaff, must be constructed of stainless steel or aluminum. A sharp point, such as on a gaff hook, is to be used only for holding the monofilament fishing line and should never contact the sea turtle.

(*2*) *Extended reach handle.* The handle must have a minimum length equal to the height of the vessel's freeboard, or 6 ft. (1.83 m), whichever is greater. The handle must be sturdy and strong enough to facilitate the secure attachment of the gaff hook.

(E) *Dipnet.* One dipnet, meeting the minimum design standards, is required onboard. Dipnets are to be used to facilitate safe handling of sea turtles by allowing them to be brought onboard for fishing gear removal, without causing further injury to the animal. Turtles must not be brought onboard without the use of a dipnet. The minimum design standards for dipnets are as follows:

(*1*) *Size of dipnet.* The dipnet must have a sturdy net hoop of at least 31 inches (78.74 cm) inside diameter and a bag depth of at least 38 inches (96.52 cm) to accommodate turtles below 3 ft. (0.914 m) carapace length. The bag mesh openings may not exceed 3 inches (7.62 cm). There must be no sharp edges or burrs on the hoop, or where the hoop is attached to the handle.

(*2*) *Extended reach handle.* The dipnet hoop must be securely fastened to an extended reach handle or pole with a minimum length equal to, or greater than, 150 percent of the height of the vessel's freeboard, or at least 6 ft (1.83 m), whichever is greater. The handle must made of a rigid material strong enough to facilitate the sturdy attachment of the net hoop and able to support a minimum of 100 lbs (34.1 kg) without breaking or significant bending or distortion. It is recommended, but not required, that the extended reach handle break down into sections.

(F) *Tire.* A minimum of one tire is required onboard for supporting a turtle in an upright orientation while it is onboard, although an assortment of sizes is recommended to accommodate a range of turtle sizes. The required tire must be a standard passenger vehicle tire, and must be free of exposed steel belts.

(G) *Short-handled dehooker for ingested hooks.* One short-handled device, meeting the minimum design standards, is required onboard for removing ingested hooks. This dehooker is designed to remove ingested hooks from boated sea turtles. It can also be used on external hooks or hooks in the front of the mouth. Minimum design standards are as follows:

(*1*) *Hook removal device.* The hook removal device must be constructed of ¼-inch (6.35 mm) 316 L stainless steel, and must allow the hook to be secured and the barb shielded without re-engaging during the removal process. It must be no larger than 15⁄16 inch (3.33 cm) outside diameter. It may not have any unprotected terminal points (including blunt ones), as this could cause injury to the esophagus during hook removal. A sliding PVC bite block must be used to protect the beak and facilitate hook removal if the turtle bites down on the dehooking device. The bite block should be constructed of a ¾-inch (1.91 cm) inside diameter high impact plastic cylinder (*e.g.*, Schedule 80 PVC) that is 10 inches (25.4 cm) long to allow for 5 inches (12.7 cm) of slide along the shaft. The device must be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles used in the pelagic longline fishery targeting swordfish and tuna.

(*2*) *Handle length.* The handle should be approximately 16–24 inches (40.64 cm–60.69 cm) in length, with approximately a 5-inch (12.7 cm) long tube T-handle of approximately 1 inch (2.54 cm) in diameter.

(H) *external hooks.* One short-handled dehooker for external hooks, meeting the minimum design standards, is required onboard. The short-handled dehooker for ingested hooks required to comply with paragraph (c)(5)(i)(G) of this section will also satisfy this requirement. Minimum design standards are as follows:

(*1*) *Hook removal device.* The dehooker must be constructed of 5⁄16-inch (7.94 cm) 316 L stainless steel, and the design must be such that a hook can be rotated out without pulling it out at an angle. The dehooking end must be

blunt, and all edges rounded. The device must be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles used in the pelagic longline fishery targeting swordfish and tuna.

(*2*) *Handle length.* The handle should be approximately 16–24 inches (40.64 cm–60.69 cm) long with approximately a 5-inch (12.7 cm) long tube T-handle of approximately 1 inch (2.54 cm) in diameter.

(I) *Long-nose or needle-nose pliers.* One pair of long-nose or needle-nose pliers, meeting the minimum design standards, is required on board. Required long-nose or needle-nose pliers can be used to remove deeply embedded hooks from the turtle's flesh that must be twisted during removal. They can also hold PVC splice couplings, when used as mouth openers, in place. To meet the minimum design standards such pliers must generally be approximately 12 inches (30.48 cm) in length, and should be constructed of stainless steel material.

(J) *Bolt cutters.* One pair of bolt cutters, meeting the minimum design standards, is required on board. Required bolt cutters may be used to cut hooks to facilitate their removal. They should be used to cut off the eye or barb of a hook, so that it can safely be pushed through a sea turtle without causing further injury. They should also be used to cut off as much of the hook as possible, when the remainder of the hook cannot be removed. To meet the minimum design standards such bolt cutters must generally be approximately 17 inches (43.18 cm) in total length, with 4-inch (10.16 cm) long blades that are 2¼ inches (5.72 cm) wide, when closed, and with 13-inch (33.02 cm) long handles. Required bolt cutters must be able to cut hard metals, such as stainless or carbon steel hooks, up to ¼-inch (6.35 mm) diameter.

(K) *Monofilament line cutters.* One pair of monofilament line cutters is required on board. Required monofilament line cutters must be used to remove fishing line as close to the eye of the hook as possible, if the hook is swallowed or cannot be removed. To meet the minimum design standards such monofilament line cutters must generally be approximately 7½ inches (19.05 cm) in length. The blades must be 1 in (4.45 cm) in length and ⅝-in (1.59 cm) wide, when closed, and are recommended to be coated with Teflon (a trademark owned by E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Company Corp.).

(L) *Mouth openers/mouth gags.* Required mouth openers and mouth gags are used to open sea turtle mouths, and to keep them open when removing ingested hooks from boated turtles. They must allow access to the hook or line without causing further injury to the turtle. Design standards are included in the item descriptions. At least two of the seven different types of mouth openers/gags described below are required:

(*1*) A block of hard wood. Placed in the corner of the jaw, a block of hard wood may be used to gag open a turtle's mouth. A smooth block of hard wood of a type that does not splinter (*e.g.* maple) with rounded edges should be sanded smooth, if necessary, and soaked in water to soften the wood. The dimensions should be approximately 11 inches (27.94 cm) 1 inch (2.54 cm) 1 inch (2.54 cm). A long-handled, wire shoe brush with a wooden handle, and with the wires removed, is an inexpensive, effective and practical mouth-opening device that meets these requirements.

(*2*) A set of three canine mouth gags. Canine mouth gags are highly recommended to hold a turtle's mouth open, because the gag locks into an open position to allow for hands-free operation after it is in place. A set of canine mouth gags must include one of each of the following sizes: small (5 inches) (12.7 cm), medium (6 inches) (15.24 cm), and large (7 inches) (17.78 cm). They must be constructed of stainless steel. A 1-inch (4.45 cm) piece of vinyl tubing (¾-inch (1.91 cm) outside diameter and ⅝-inch (1.59 cm) inside diameter) must be placed over the ends to protect the turtle's beak.

(*3*) A set of two sturdy dog chew bones. Placed in the corner of a turtle's jaw, canine chew bones are used to gag open a sea turtle's mouth. Required canine chews must be constructed of durable nylon, zylene resin, or thermoplastic polymer, and strong enough to withstand biting without splintering. To accommodate a variety of turtle

beak sizes, a set must include one large (5½–8 inches (13.97 cm–20.32 cm) in length), and one small (3½–4½ inches (8.89 cm–11.43 cm) in length) canine chew bones.

(*4*) A set of two rope loops covered with hose. A set of two rope loops covered with a piece of hose can be used as a mouth opener, and to keep a turtle's mouth open during hook and/or line removal. A required set consists of two 3-foot (0.91 m) lengths of poly braid rope (⅜-inch (9.52 mm) diameter suggested), each covered with an 8-inch (20.32 cm) section of ½-inch (1.27 cm) or ¾-inch (1.91 cm) light-duty garden hose, and each tied into a loop. The upper loop of rope covered with hose is secured on the upper beak to give control with one hand, and the second piece of rope covered with hose is secured on the lower beak to give control with the user's foot.

(*5*) A hank of rope. Placed in the corner of a turtle's jaw, a hank of rope can be used to gag open a sea turtle's mouth. A 6-foot (1.83 m) lanyard of approximately 3/16-inch (4.76 mm) braided nylon rope may be folded to create a hank, or looped bundle, of rope. Any size soft-braided nylon rope is allowed, however it must create a hank of approximately 2–4 inches (5.08 cm–10.16 cm) in thickness.

(*6*) A set of four PVC splice couplings. PVC splice couplings can be positioned inside a turtle's mouth to allow access to the back of the mouth for hook and line removal. They are to be held in place with the needle-nose pliers. To ensure proper fit and access, a required set must consist of the following Schedule 40 PVC splice coupling sizes: 1 inch (2.54 cm), 1¼ inch (3.18 cm), 1½ inch (3.81 cm), and 2 inches (5.08 cm).

(*7*) A large avian oral speculum. A large avian oral speculum provides the ability to hold a turtle's mouth open and to control the head with one hand, while removing a hook with the other hand. The avian oral speculum must be 9-inches (22.86 cm) long, and constructed of 3/16-inch (4.76 mm) wire diameter surgical stainless steel (Type 304). It must be covered with 8 inches (20.32 cm) of clear vinyl tubing (5/16-inch (7.9 mm) outside diameter, 3/16-inch (4.76 mm) inside diameter).

(M) *Turtle control devices.* One turtle control device, as described in paragraph (c)(5)(i)(M)(*1*) or (*2*) of this section, and meeting the minimum design standards, is required onboard and must be used to secure a front flipper of the sea turtle so that the animal can be controlled at the side of the vessel. It is strongly recommended that a pair of turtle control devices be used to secure both front flippers when crew size and conditions allow. Minimum design standards consist of:

(*1*) Turtle tether and extended reach handle. Approximately 15–20 feet of ½-inch hard lay negative buoyance line is used to make an approximately 30-inch loop to slip over the flipper. The line is fed through a ¾-inch fair lead, eyelet, or eyebolt at the working end of a pole and through a ¾-inch eyelet or eyebolt in the midsection. A ½-inch quick release cleat holds the line in place near the end of the pole. A final ¾-inch eyelet or eyebolt should be positioned approximately 7-inches behind the cleat to secure the line, while allowing a safe working distance to avoid injury when releasing the line from the cleat. The line must be securely fastened to an extended reach handle or pole with a minimum length equal to, or greater than, 150 percent of the height of the vessel's freeboard, or a minimum of 6 feet (1.83 m), whichever is greater. There is no restriction on the type of material used to construct this handle, as long as it is sturdy. The handle must include a tag line to attach the tether to the vessel to prevent the turtle from breaking away with the tether still attached.

(*2*) T&G ninja sticks and extended reach handles. Approximately 30–35 feet of ½-inch to ⅝-inch soft lay polypropylene or nylon line or similar is fed through 2 PVC conduit, fiberglass, or similar sturdy poles and knotted using an overhand (recommended) knot at the end of both poles or otherwise secured. There should be approximately 18–24 inches of exposed rope between the poles to be used as a working surface to capture and secure the flipper. Knot the line at the ends of both poles to prevent line slippage if they are not otherwise secured. The remaining line is used to tether the apparatus to the boat unless an additional tag

line is used. Two lengths of sunlight resistant ¾-inch schedule 40 PVC electrical conduit, fiberglass, aluminum, or similar material should be used to construct the apparatus with a minimum length equal to, or greater than, 150 percent of the height of the vessel's freeboard, or 6 feet (1.83 m), whichever is greater.

(ii) *Handling and release requirements.* (A) Sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear, as required by paragraphs (c)(5)(i)(A) through (D) of this section, must be used to disengage any hooked or entangled sea turtles that cannot be brought onboard. Sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear, as required by paragraphs (c)(5)(i)(E) through (M) of this section, must be used to facilitate access, safe handling, disentanglement, and hook removal or hook cutting of sea turtles that can be brought onboard, where feasible. Sea turtles must be handled, and bycatch mitigation gear must be used, in accordance with the careful release protocols and handling/release guidelines specified in paragraph (a)(3) of this section, and in accordance with the onboard handling and resuscitation requirements specified in § 223.206(d)(1) of this title.

(B) *Boated turtles.* When practicable, active and comatose sea turtles must be brought on board, with a minimum of injury, using a dipnet as required by paragraph (c)(5)(i)(E) of this section. All turtles less than 3 ft. (.91 m) carapace length should be boated, if sea conditions permit.

(*1*) A boated turtle should be placed on a standard automobile tire, or cushioned surface, in an upright orientation to immobilize it and facilitate gear removal. Then, it should be determined if the hook can be removed without causing further injury.

(*2*) All externally embedded hooks should be removed, unless hook removal would result in further injury to the turtle. No attempt to remove a hook should be made if it has been swallowed and the insertion point is not visible, or if it is determined that removal would result in further injury.

(*3*) If a hook cannot be removed, as much line as possible should be removed from the turtle using monofilament cutters as required by paragraph (c)(5)(i) of this section, and the hook should be cut as close as possible to the insertion point before releasing the turtle, using boltcutters as required by paragraph (c)(5)(i) of this section.

(*4*) If a hook can be removed, an effective technique may be to cut off either the barb, or the eye, of the hook using bolt cutters, and then to slide the hook out. When the hook is visible in the front of the mouth, a mouth-opener, as required by paragraph (c)(5)(i) of this section, may facilitate opening the turtle's mouth and a gag may facilitate keeping the mouth open. Short-handled dehookers for ingested hooks, long-nose pliers, or needle-nose pliers, as required by paragraph (c)(5)(i) of this section, should be used to remove visible hooks from the mouth that have not been swallowed on boated turtles, as appropriate.

(*5*) As much gear as possible must be removed from the turtle without causing further injury prior to its release. Refer to the careful release protocols and handling/release guidelines required in paragraph (a)(3) of this section, and the handling and resuscitation requirements specified in § 223.206(d)(1) of this title, for additional information.

(C) *Non-boated turtles.* If a sea turtle is too large, or hooked in a manner that precludes safe boating without causing further damage or injury to the turtle, sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear required by paragraphs (c)(5)(i)(A) through (D) of this section must be used to disentangle sea turtles from fishing gear and disengage any hooks, or to clip the line and remove as much line as possible from a hook that cannot be removed, prior to releasing the turtle, in accordance with the protocols specified in paragraph (a)(3) of this section.

(*1*) Non-boated turtles should be brought close to the boat and provided with time to calm down. Then, it must be determined whether or not the hook can be removed without causing further injury. A front flipper or flippers of the turtle must be secured with an approved turtle control device from the list specified in paragraph (c)(2)(iv)(D) of this section.

(*2*) All externally embedded hooks must be removed, unless hook removal

would result in further injury to the turtle. No attempt should be made to remove a hook if it has been swallowed, or if it is determined that removal would result in further injury. If the hook cannot be removed and/or if the animal is entangled, as much line as possible must be removed prior to release, using a line cutter as required by paragraph (c)(5)(i) of this section. If the hook can be removed, it must be removed using a long-handled dehooker as required by paragraph (c)(5)(i) of this section.

(*3*) Without causing further injury, as much gear as possible must be removed from the turtle prior to its release. Refer to the careful release protocols and handling/release guidelines required in paragraph (a)(3) of this section, and the handling and resuscitation requirements specified in § 223.206(d)(1) for additional information.

(iii) *Gear modifications.* The following measures are required of vessel operators to reduce the incidental capture and mortality of sea turtles:

(A) *Gangion length.* The length of any gangion on vessels that have pelagic longline gear on board and that have been issued, or are required to have, a swordfish, shark, or Atlantic Tunas Longline category LAP for use in the Atlantic Ocean including the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico must be at least 10 percent longer than any floatline length if the total length of any gangion plus the total length of any floatline is less than 100 meters.

(B) *Bait.* Vessels fishing outside of the Northeast Distant gear restricted area, as defined at § 635.2, that have pelagic longline gear on board, and that have been issued or are required to be issued a LAP under this part, are limited, at all times, to possessing on board and/or using only whole finfish and/or squid bait except that if green-stick gear is also on board, artificial bait may be possessed, but may be used only with green-stick gear.

(C) *Hook size and type.* Vessels fishing outside of the Northeast Distant gear restricted area, as defined at § 635.2, that have pelagic longline gear on board, and that have been issued or are required to be issued a LAP under this part are limited, at all times, to possessing on board and/or using only 16/0 or larger non-offset circle hooks or 18/0 or larger circle hooks with an offset not to exceed 10°. These hooks must meet the criteria listed in paragraphs (c)(5)(iii)(C)(*1*) through (*3*) of this section. A limited exception for the possession and use of J hooks when green-stick gear is on board is described in paragraph (c)(5)(iii)(C)(*4*) of this section.

(*1*) For the 18/0 or larger circle hooks with an offset not to exceed 10°, the outer diameter of an 18/0 circle hook at its widest point must be no smaller than 2.16 inches (55 mm), when measured with the eye of the hook on the vertical axis (y-axis) and perpendicular to the horizontal axis (x-axis). The distance between the hook point and the shank (*i.e.*, the gap) on an 18/0 circle hook must be no larger than 1.13 inches (28.8 mm). The allowable offset is measured from the barbed end of the hook, and is relative to the parallel plane of the eyed-end, or shank, of the hook when laid on its side. The only allowable offset circle hooks are those that are offset by the hook manufacturer.

(*2*) For the 16/0 or larger non-offset circle hooks, the outer diameter of a 16/0 circle hook at its widest point must be no smaller than 1.74 inches (44.3 mm), when measured with the eye of the hook on the vertical axis (y-axis) and perpendicular to the horizontal axis (x-axis). The distance between the hook point and the shank (*i.e.*, the gap) on a 16/0 circle hook must be no larger than 1.01 inches (25.8 mm).

(*3*) Between the months of January through June of any given calendar year in the Gulf of Mexico, all circle hooks must also be constructed of corrodible round wire stock that is no larger than 3.65 mm in diameter. For the purposes of this section, the Gulf of Mexico includes all waters of the U.S. EEZ west and north of the boundary stipulated at 50 CFR 600.105(c).

(*4*) If green-stick gear, as defined at § 635.2, is also on board, a vessel that has pelagic longline gear on board, may possess up to 20 J-hooks. J-hooks may be used only with green-stick gear, and no more than 10 hooks may be used at one time with each green-stick gear. J-hooks used with green-stick gear may be no smaller than 1.5 inch (38.1 mm)

when measured in a straight line over the longest distance from the eye to any other part of the hook.

(iv) *Approval of sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear.* NMFS will file with the Office of the Federal Register for publication an initial list of required sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear that NMFS has approved as meeting the minimum design standards specified under paragraph (c)(5)(i) of this section. Other devices proposed for use, such as line clippers or cutters or dehookers, as specified under paragraphs (c)(5)(i)(A) through (C), (G), and (H) through (K) of this section, must be approved as meeting the minimum design standards before being used. NMFS will examine new devices, as they become available, to determine if they meet the minimum design standards, and will file with the Office of the Federal Register for publication notification of any new devices that are approved as meeting the standards.

(6) The owner or operator of a vessel permitted or required to be permitted under this part and that has pelagic longline gear on board must undertake the following shark bycatch mitigation measures:

(i) *Handling and release requirements.* As safely as practicable, any hooked or entangled sharks that are not being retained must be released using dehookers or line clippers or cutters. If using a line clipper or cutter, the gangion must be cut so that less than three feet (91.4 cm) of line remains attached to the hook.

(ii) *Fleet communication and relocation protocol.* The owner or operator of any vessel that catches a dusky shark must, as quickly as practicable, broadcast the location of the dusky shark interaction over the radio to other fishing vessels in the surrounding area. Subsequent fishing sets by that vessel on that trip must be at least 1 nmi from the reported location of the dusky shark catch. Vessel owners and operators are encouraged to move the vessel further away than 1 nmi if conditions (*e.g.*, water temperature, depth, tide, etc.) indicate that moving a greater distance is warranted to avoid additional dusky shark interactions.

(d) *Bottom longlines.* (1) If bottom longline gear is onboard a vessel issued a permit under this part, persons aboard that vessel may not fish or deploy any type of fishing gear in the following areas:

(i) The mid-Atlantic shark closed area from January 1 through July 31 each calendar year;

(ii) The areas designated at § 622.435(a)(2)(i) through (iii) of this chapter, year-round; and

(iii) The areas described in paragraphs (d)(1)(iii)(A) through (H) of this section, year-round.

(A) *Snowy Grouper Wreck.* Bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following points: 33°25′ N. lat., 77°04.75′ W. long.; 33°34.75′ N. lat., 76°51.3′ W. long.; 33°25.5′ N. lat., 76°46.5′ W. long.; 33°15.75′ N. lat., 77°00.0′ W. long.; 33°25′ N. lat., 77°04.75′ W. long.

(B) *Northern South Carolina.* Bounded on the north by 32°53.5′ N. lat.; on the south by 32°48.5′ N. lat.; on the east by 78°04.75′ W. long.; and on the west by 78°16.75′ W. long.

(C) *Edisto.* Bounded on the north by 32°24′ N. lat.; on the south by 32°18.5′ N. lat.; on the east by 78°54.0′ W. long.; and on the west by 79°06.0′ W. long.

(D) *Charleston Deep Artificial Reef.* Bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following points: 32°9.65′ N lat., 79°9.2′ W long.; 32°7.155′ N lat., 79°5.595′ W long.; 32°2.36′ N lat., 79°9.975′ W long.; 32°5.04′ N lat., 79°13.575′ W long.

(E) *Georgia.* Bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following points: 31°43′ N. lat., 79°31′ W. long.; 31°43′ N. lat., 79°21′ W. long.; 31°34′ N. lat., 79°29′ W. long.; 31°34′ N. lat., 79°39′ W. long; 31°43′ N. lat., 79°31′ W. long.

(F) *North Florida.* Bounded on the north by 30°29′ N. lat.; on the south by 30°19′ N. lat.; on the east by 80°02′ W. long.; and on the west by 80°14′ W. long.

(G) *St. Lucie Hump.* Bounded on the north by 27°08′ N. lat.; on the south by 27°04′ N. lat.; on the east by 79°58′ W. long.; and on the west by 80°00′ W. long.

(H) *East Hump.* Bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following points: 24°36.5′ N. lat., 80°45.5′ W. long.; 24°32′ N. lat., 80°36′ W. long; 24°27.5′ N. lat., 80°38.5′ W. long; 24°32.5′ N. lat., 80°48′ W. long.; 24°36.5′ N. lat., 80°45.5′ W. long.

(2) The operator of a vessel required to be permitted under this part and that has bottom longline gear on board

must undertake the following bycatch mitigation measures:

(i) *Possession and use of required mitigation gear.* The equipment listed in paragraph (c)(5)(i) of this section must be carried on board and must be used to handle, release, and disentangle hooked or entangled sea turtles, prohibited sharks, or smalltooth sawfish in accordance with requirements specified in paragraph (d)(2)(ii) of this section.

(ii) *Handling and release requirements.* Sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear, as required by paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section, must be used to disengage any hooked or entangled sea turtle as stated in paragraph (c)(5)(ii) of this section. This mitigation gear should also be employed to disengage any hooked or entangled species of prohibited sharks as listed under heading D, Prohibited Sharks, of Table 1 of appendix A to this part, any hooked or entangled species of sharks that exceed the retention limits as specified in §635.24(a), and any hooked or entangled smalltooth sawfish. In addition, if a smalltooth sawfish is caught, the fish should be kept in the water while maintaining water flow over the gills and the fish should be examined for research tags. All smalltooth sawfish must be released in a manner that will ensure maximum probability of survival, but without removing the fish from the water or any research tags from the fish.

(iii) *Fleet communication and relocation protocol.* The owner or operator of any vessel that catches a dusky shark must, as quickly as practicable, broadcast the location of the dusky shark interaction over the radio to other fishing vessels in the surrounding area. Subsequent fishing sets by that vessel on that trip must be at least 1 nmi from the reported location of the dusky shark catch. Vessel owners and operators are encouraged to move the vessel further away than 1 nmi if conditions (*e.g.*, water temperature, depth, tide, etc.) indicate that moving a greater distance is warranted to avoid additional dusky shark interactions.

(3) If a vessel issued or required to be issued a permit under this part is in a closed area designated under paragraph (d)(1) of this section and has pelagic longline gear onboard, the vessel may not, at any time, possess or land any demersal species listed in Table 3 of Appendix A to this part in excess of 5 percent, by weight, of the total weight of pelagic and demersal species possessed or landed, that are listed in Tables 2 and 3 of Appendix A to this part.

(4) Vessels that have bottom longline gear on board and that have been issued, or are required to have been issued, a directed shark limited access permit under §635.4(e) must have only circle hooks as defined at §635.2 on board.

(5) If a vessel issued or required to be issued a permit under this part has bottom longline gear on board persons aboard that vessel are required to promptly release in a manner that causes the least harm, any shortfin mako shark that is alive at the time of haulback.

(e) *Purse seine*—(1) *Mesh size.* A purse seine used in directed fishing for bluefin tuna must have a mesh size equal to or smaller than 4.5 inches (11.4 cm) in the main body (stretched when wet) and must have at least 24-count thread throughout the net.

(2) *Inspection of purse seine vessels.* Persons that own or operate an Atlantic Tunas purse seine vessel must have their fishing gear inspected for mesh size by an enforcement agent of NMFS prior to commencing fishing for the season in any fishery that may result in the harvest of Atlantic tunas. Such persons must request such inspection at least 24 hours before commencement of the first fishing trip of the season. If NMFS does not inspect the vessel within 24 hours of such notification, the inspection requirement is waived. In addition, at least 24 hours before commencement of offloading any bluefin tuna after a fishing trip, such persons must request an inspection of the vessel and catch by notifying NMFS. If, after notification by the vessel, NMFS does not arrange to inspect the vessel and catch at offloading, the inspection requirement is waived.

(f) *Rod and reel.* (1) Persons who have been issued or are required to be issued a permit under this part and who are participating in a ''tournament,'' as defined in §635.2, that bestows points, prizes, or awards for Atlantic billfish

must deploy only non-offset circle hooks when using natural bait or natural bait/artificial lure combinations, and may not deploy a J-hook or an offset circle hook in combination with natural bait or a natural bait/artificial lure combination.

(2) A person on board a vessel that has been issued or is required to be issued a permit with a shark endorsement under this part and who is participating in an HMS registered tournament that bestows points, prizes, or awards for Atlantic sharks must deploy only non-offset, corrodible circle hooks when fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing sharks, except when fishing with flies or artificial lures.

(3) A person on board a vessel that has been issued or is required to be issued an HMS Angling permit with a shark endorsement or an HMS Charter/Headboat permit with a shark endorsement must deploy only non-offset, corrodible circle hooks when fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing sharks, except when fishing with flies or artificial lures.

(g) *Gillnet.* (1) Persons fishing with gillnet gear must comply with the provisions implementing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan, the Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Plan, the Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan, and any other relevant Take Reduction Plan set forth in §§ 229.32 through 229.35 of this title. If a listed whale is taken, the vessel operator must cease fishing operations immediately and contact NMFS as required under part 229 of this title.

(2) While fishing with a drift gillnet, a vessel issued or required to be issued a Federal Atlantic commercial shark LAP and/or a Federal commercial smoothhound permit must conduct net checks at least every 2 hours to look for and remove any sea turtles, marine mammals, Atlantic sturgeon, or smalltooth sawfish, and the drift gillnet must remain attached to at least one vessel at one end, except during net checks. Smalltooth sawfish must not be removed from the water while being removed from the net.

(3) While fishing with a sink gillnet, vessels issued or required to be issued a Federal Atlantic commercial shark LAP and/or a Federal commercial smoothhound permit must limit the soak time of the sink gillnet gear to no more than 24 hours, measured from the time the sink gillnet first enters the water to the time it is completely removed from the water. Smalltooth sawfish must not be removed from the water while being removed from the net.

(4) No person may fish for sharks with a gillnet with a total length of 2.5 km or more. No vessel may have on board a gillnet with a total length of 2.5 km or more.

(5) *Fleet communication and relocation protocol.* The owner or operator of any vessel issued or required to be issued a Federal Atlantic commercial shark limited access permit that catches a dusky shark must, as quickly as practicable, broadcast the location of the dusky shark interaction over the radio to other fishing vessels in the surrounding area. Subsequent fishing sets by that vessel that trip must be at least 1 nmi from the reported location of the dusky shark catch. Vessel owners and operators are encouraged to move the vessel further away than 1 nmi if conditions (*e.g.*, water temperature, depth, tide, etc.) indicate that moving a greater distance is warranted to avoid additional dusky shark interactions.

(6) If a vessel issued or required to be issued a permit under this part has gillnet gear onboard, persons aboard that vessel are required to promptly release in a manner that causes the least harm any shortfin mako shark that is alive at the time of haulback.

(h) *Buoy gear.* Vessels utilizing buoy gear may not possess or deploy more than 35 floatation devices, and may not deploy more than 35 individual buoy gears per vessel. Buoy gear must be constructed and deployed so that the hooks and/or gangions are attached to the vertical portion of the mainline. Floatation devices may be attached to one but not both ends of the mainline, and no hooks or gangions may be attached to any floatation device or horizontal portion of the mainline. If more than one floatation device is attached to a buoy gear, no hook or gangion may be attached to the mainline between them. Individual buoy gears may

not be linked, clipped, or connected together in any way. Buoy gears must be released and retrieved by hand. All deployed buoy gear must have some type of monitoring equipment affixed to it including, but not limited to, radar reflectors, beeper devices, lights, or reflective tape. If only reflective tape is affixed, the vessel deploying the buoy gear must possess on board an operable spotlight capable of illuminating deployed floatation devices. If a gear monitoring device is positively buoyant, and rigged to be attached to a fishing gear, it is included in the 35 floatation device vessel limit and must be marked appropriately.

(i) *Speargun fishing gear.* Speargun fishing gear may only be utilized when recreational fishing for Atlantic BAYS tunas and only from vessels issued either a valid HMS Angling or valid HMS Charter/Headboat permit. Persons fishing for Atlantic BAYS tunas using speargun gear, as specified in §635.19, must be physically in the water when the speargun is fired or discharged, and may freedive, use SCUBA, or other underwater breathing devices. Only free-swimming BAYS tunas, not those restricted by fishing lines or other means, may be taken by speargun fishing gear. ''Powerheads,'' as defined at §600.10 of this chapter, or any other explosive devices, may not be used to harvest or fish for BAYS tunas with speargun fishing gear.

(j) *Green-stick gear.* Green-stick gear may only be utilized when fishing from vessels issued a valid Atlantic Tunas General, Swordfish General Commercial, HMS Charter/Headboat, or Atlantic Tunas Longline category permit. The gear must be attached to the vessel, actively trolled with the mainline at or above the water's surface, and may not be deployed with more than 10 hooks or gangions attached.

(k) *Handline.* (1) A person on board a vessel that has been issued or is required to be issued a permit with a shark endorsement under this part and who is participating in an HMS registered tournament that bestows points, prizes, or awards for Atlantic sharks must deploy only non-offset, corrodible circle hooks when fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing sharks, except when fishing with flies or artificial lures.

(2) A person on board a vessel that has been issued or is required to be issued an HMS Angling permit with a shark endorsement or a person on board a vessel with an HMS Charter/Headboat permit with a shark endorsement must deploy only non-offset, corrodible circle hooks when fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing, except when fishing with flies or artificial lures.

[79 FR 71594, Dec. 2, 2014, as amended at 80 FR 60567, Oct. 7, 2015; 80 FR 73145, Nov. 24, 2015; 81 FR 57806, Aug. 24, 2016; 82 FR 16507, Apr. 4, 2017; 83 FR 33154, July 17, 2018; 84 FR 5376, Feb. 21, 2019; 85 FR 18841, Apr. 2, 2020]

§ 635.22 Recreational retention limits.

(a) *General.* (1) Atlantic HMS caught, possessed, retained, or landed under these recreational limits may not be sold or transferred to any person for a commercial purpose. Recreational retention limits apply to a longbill spearfish taken or possessed shoreward of the outer boundary of the Atlantic EEZ, to a shark taken from or possessed in the Atlantic Ocean including the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, to a North Atlantic swordfish taken from or possessed in the Atlantic Ocean, and to bluefin and yellowfin tuna taken from or possessed in the Atlantic Ocean. The operator of a vessel for which a retention limit applies is responsible for the vessel retention limit and for the cumulative retention limit based on the number of persons aboard. Federal recreational retention limits may not be combined with any recreational retention limit applicable in state waters.

(2) Vessels issued an HMS General Category permit under §635.4(d) that are participating in a HMS registered tournament, vessels issued a HMS Angling category permit under §635.4(c), or vessels issued a HMS Charter/Headboat permit under §635.4(b) may not retain, possess or land oceanic whitetip sharks or scalloped, smooth, or great hammerhead sharks if swordfish, tuna, or billfish are retained or possessed on board, or offloaded from, the vessel. Such vessels also may not retain, possess or land swordfish, tuna, or billfish if oceanic whitetip sharks,